

Rep. Ralph Norman (SC-05)

Thank you, Chairman Womack and to the whole committee for allowing me to come testify about budget and appropriations reform. I certainly appreciate the opportunity.

First, let me start by saying the one thing that everyone knows – our budget process is broken, point-blank. The 1974 Congressional Budget Act specifically laid out what Congress' role is, and the timeline, for passing an annual budget and the twelve annual appropriations bills. The last time Congress passed all 12 appropriations bills on time? 1997.

That means for twenty years, Congress has essentially not done its job when it comes to funding our government in a timely manner. In fact, for six straight years, between fiscal years 2011 and 2016, not one single appropriations bill was passed on time.

How is this possible? This issue is not a Democrat or Republican issue. This is a bipartisan issue. As a business owner, if I had an annual deadline for my budget, there would be no way my doors would still be open if I did not provide a budget for six straight years. Why doesn't Congress abide by its own rules?

Our nation cannot and will not remain solvent if we keep passing these trillion-dollar omnibuses and continuing resolutions. My constituents will not allow me to vote for something like that. There is a regular order and we must follow it. One thing that I find most astonishing is that these appropriation bills only cover about a third of all federal spending. We need to find solutions, and do it sooner than later.

While entitlement spending is the biggest driver our spending problems, there must be ways Congress can fix our current appropriations process. The current budget process does not force lawmakers to confront fiscal and economic reality.

- Would a bi-annual budget and appropriations process work better?
- Would strictly voting on monetary values, with no policy riders in appropriations bills alleviate the problem?
- Last year, the House passed all 12 appropriations bills in regular order with amendments, and the Senate did nothing. What do we need to do to ensure the Senate acts? Would implementing language, forcing them to act, work better?

It's time for Congress, and an administration willing to make tough decisions regarding our spending, to act. It's time for us to start making those tough decisions. We need to reform entitlement programs. We need to cut spending, regulations, and taxes. We need to do it through a revamped budget process. We are all here because we told our constituents that we can make tough decisions. Let's go back to the basics and prove to those who elected us that we can, in fact, work together to fund our government on time and that we can tackle our out-of-control spending. I applaud the Chairman and the committee for taking that first step with their budget.

I yield back.